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ANALYSIS BRANCH

FROM : Amembassy Tel Aviv

DATE: August 12, 1972

SUBJECT : Israelis and the Jewish Defense League

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Against the background of widespread Israeli opposition to the tactics and extremism of the Jewish Defense League, articles in the press or quiet endorsements from other sources will occasionally surface and lead to speculation that perhaps public opinion is not really opposed to the JDL after all. One recently-published newspaper article which caught the imagination of Israelis gave a glorified account of a kidnap plot which was masterminded and attempted by the JDL nearly two years ago.

In an interview with a reporter for the daily Yediot Aharonot, an American Jewish couple which has since settled in Israel revealed details of the plan to kidnap Leila Halevi, a member of the fedayeen, who was to be released from a British prison following her unsuccessful attempt to hijack an El Al airliner. The elaborate scheme had contingency plans which provided for kidnapping her as she was to board a plane for Beirut, shooting her on the runway if they could not get close enough to reach her physically, or following her to Beirut and killing her and themselves in a last-ditch suicide plan. The JDL couple was to arrive at London airport from New York in a plane scheduled to land while Miss Halevi was to be boarding her flight. As the story had it, however, fate intervened in the form of American security agents who discovered the couple's concealed weapons at Kennedy Airport and arrested them as suspected hijackers. While the two were under interrogation, their accomplices were able to cover their tracks in both New York and London and until now, it was claimed, the true story remained a secret.

The article read like the thriller Israelis love so much, and there was no question as to who were the good guys in the tale. The moral, of course, was that while the JDL may have lost a battle, it has not

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2

lost the war, and the reader is left to await the next exciting episode in the saga. This story follows by some months an article entitled "In Favor of Rabbi Kahane" which appeared in the weekly publication of Israel's Labor Party. While moderate in tone, it clearly expressed support for the JDL leader and deplored the action of the recent World Zionist Congress which barred him from speaking to its assembly.

These are not isolated instances of endorsement for Kahane and the JDL. There are pockets of support which remain committed to the policies of the group in the United States and Israel. These people believe that actions such as the JDL's August 9 sit-in at the Soviet Interests Section of the Finnish Embassy in Tel Aviv are necessary if they are to ensure that persecution of the Jews will "Never Again" recur. Nevertheless, broad support for the JDL is still absent and is not likely to develop in the near future.

While the Israeli public may feel that the Jewish people cannot afford to remain silent and applaud the fact that the JDL may keep the plight of the Jews in the world's consciousness, they generally reject the fanaticism of its membership and its frequent calls to violence. They find that one of the strengths of the Jewish people has been its morality and commitment to law and order. With this gone, they would be no better than other peoples against whom they have done battle during their thousands of years, and this would bring the seeds of their own destruction. The Silent Jew, however, is a thing of the past. While they may not encourage the JDL, Israelis will not completely dissociate themselves from the group either.

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